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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000825

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: PREL PBTS RS MD

SUBJECT: GOM TO IGNORE TRANSNISTRIAN ANNOUNCEMENT
OF SEVERED TIES OVER GEORGIA CRISIS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Kelly A.
Keiderling for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Transnistrian "Foreign Ministry" issued a declaration August 12 announcing that it would sever links with the Moldovan government until Chisinau issued a decisive statement condemning Georgian "aggression" against South Ossetia. Minister Sova told Embassy that the GOM plans to ignore this statement and remained focused on maintaining progress on confidence-building measures and political talks. Sova hopes for a 3-plus-2 meeting by the end of August in order to discuss the package and make preparations for an immediate 5-plus-2 afterwards. End Summary.

Transnistria Severs Ties with Moldova

¶2. (U) On August 12 the Transnistrian "Foreign Ministry" issued a declaration announcing a moratorium on any contacts between Tiraspol and Chisinau authorities until the Moldovan leadership issued a decisive condemnation of "Georgian aggression against South Ossetia." Referring to the GOM refusal to allow a meeting of the humanitarian working group at the Russian Embassy on August 8, the declaration also demanded "equal treatment of all conflict mediators and observers," in light of the meeting on transportation issues (i.e. MCC roads) that was held at the U.S. Embassy earlier in the week. "President" Smirnov signed a decree proclaiming a day of mourning for the victims of Georgia's aggression against South Ossetia, and justifying Russian actions as being within the framework of its peacekeeping mandate. Smirnov appointed "Minister of Security" Antiufeev as his Special Envoy for liaison with the state power bodies of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

GOM to Ignore TN Statement, Keep 5-plus-2 Going

¶3. (C) In an August 13 meeting, Minister for Reintegration Vasile Sova informed Charge and Pol/Econ Chief that the GOM planned to ignore the Transnistrian statement, as any emotional response could lead to escalating negative exchanges. Instead, Moldova's goal was to continue the activities of the working groups and try to get the 5-plus-2 to move forward on a political settlement. Sova said he had met earlier that day with each of the 3-plus-2 members for consultation on the GOM's intended approach and received full support from all. Sova reported that Russian Ambassador Kouzmin had

concurred with the idea that, if the GOM did nothing, the Transnistrian outburst would most likely quiet down in a week or so.

¶4. (C) Charge welcomed a mature non-emotional GOM response and promised to inform Washington. She noted that, in light of the GOM approach, Embassy would suggest that the USG also follow this approach and ignore the statement.

¶5. (C) Sova spoke about the possibility of holding a 3-plus-2 meeting by the end of August (or very early in September) in order to discuss the package and make preparations for an immediate 5-plus-2 afterwards. Sova said that the next step would be a Smirnov meeting in Moscow, in which he hoped Medvedev would convince the Transnistrian leader of the need for a settlement. He told us that Transnistrian Acting "Foreign Minister" Yastrebchak was currently in Moscow, on a trip that Sova hoped was aimed at preparing for a Smirnov visit there. Sova said that no date had been set yet for a Voronin trip to Moscow, but that Voronin was declining the Russian invitation to attend the traditional horse races in September, as he preferred a separate meeting with Medvedev. After a Voronin meeting with the Russian President, a 3-plus-2 meeting could then take place, Sova thought. Sova continued to express hopes that a prompt agreement on the package document would allow time to bring the issue to the Moldovan

CHISINAU 00000825 002 OF 002

Parliament by November. He stressed the GOM position that a final settlement to the Transnistrian conflict was possible only within the framework of the 5-plus-2.

Comment: Politicizing a Humanitarian Tragedy

¶6. (C) The past few months have witnessed some very positive momentum in confidence-building, which Transnistria now appears ready to jettison in order to help whitewash Russian actions in Georgia. Smirnov may feel that currying Russian favor will strengthen his hand at this juncture in the process. This posture allows him to portray himself as the valiant war leader defending the interests of beleaguered people, a role in which he has excelled. We believe that actors in Moscow are behind the Transnistrian decision to create this artificial linkage between Moldova and the Georgia crisis. However, the Russian Ambassador's comments viewing the Transnistrian approach as a temporary outburst suggest the possibility of poor coordination on the Russian side.

¶7. (C) By remaining focused on its own negotiating goals and refusing to take the Transnistrian bait, the GOM is trying to limit the negative spillover from the Georgian crisis. Embassy plans to parallel the GOM approach by ignoring the Transnistrian declaration. We will continue current projects in Transnistria, distributing emergency flood assistance, delivering Operation Provide Hope medical equipment, soliciting Transnistrian applicants for the Cochran program, arranging a seminar on Avian Flu in September, and beginning technical assessment on Transnistrian roads envisioned for reconstruction under the MCC Compact Program. We hope the Transnistrians will continue with business as usual if we all ignore their

temperamental overreaction.

KEIDERLING